

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ERDA-07 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-02

COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 USIA-15

SAM-01 OES-05 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 FRB-01

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, ENRG, IS

SUBJ: OIL EXPORTS FROM ASHKELON HALTED DUE
TO STRIKE

1. GOI INTER- MINISTERIAL APPROVAL OF DECISION
BY ASHKELON-EILAT PIPELINE COMPANY MANAGEMENT TO CLOSE
OIL PORT IN ASHKELON DUE TO STRIKE ANNOUNCED JUNE 3.
PRESS ESTIMATES CLOSURE OF PORT WILL COST ISRAELI
ECONOMY QUOTE TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS UNQUOTE.

2. STRIKE FIRST STARTED NEARLY TWO MONTHS AGO WHEN
SOME 65 MARITIME PORT WORKERS ENGAGED IN BERTHING
TANKS AND RUNNING OIL FROM PIPES TO SHIPS STAGED STRIKE
IN PROTEST AGAINST PLANNED DISMISSAL OF 13 REDUNDANT
WORKERS AND TRANSFER OF FIVE WORKERS TO EILAT AND
BEERSHEBA. STRIKE, INVOLVING COMMANDEERING
OF TUG BOATS, CALLED OFF AT REQUEST OF HISTADRUT,
WHICH OFFERED TO MEDIATE.

3. STRIKE WAS RESUMED ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN
HISTADRUT HANDED DOWN OPINION UPHOLDING DISMISSALS,
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AS PORT ACTIVITY HAS DECREASED. HISTADRUT RECOMMENDED

THAT PRIVATE CONTRACTOR ENGAGED BY PIPELINE COMPANY TO PERFORM CERTAIN WORK ITS OWN EMPLOYEES REFUSED TO DO SHOULD NOT PERFORM WOULD NORMALLY DONE BY COMPANY'S PORT WORKERS. WORKERS AGAIN COMMANDEERED FOUR TUG BOATS AND DEMANDED DISCHARGE OF CONTRACTOR RATHER THAN DISMISSAL AND TRANSFERS OF PORT EMPLOYEES.

4. POLICE HAVE ARRESTED AROUND EIGHT STRIKERS, FOLLOWING COURT INJUNCTION AGAINST STRIKE, BUT 20 STRIKERS STILL OUT TO SEA. POLICE HAVE FAILED IN EFFORTS TO FORCE RETURN OF SHIPS TO PORT, LARGELY BECAUSE OF DECISION NOT TO USE EXCESSIVE FORCE. OTHER MARITIME UNIONS HAD THREATENED STRIKES IF POLICE FORCE USED.

5. DECISION TO CLOSE PORT CAME IN WAKE OF STALEMATE IN EFFORTS BY SENIOR GOI AND HISTADRUT OFFICIALS OVER PAST TWO DAYS TO FIND SOLUTION ENDING STRIKE.

6. STRIKE HAS DRAWN WIDE PUBLICITY AND CONDEMNATION. JERUSALEM POST CARTOONIST EXPLAINED REDUCTION OF IDF FORCES NEAR CANAL DUE TO THEIR NEED AT ASHKELON. WHILE ISRAEL GENERALLY HAS HIGH TOLERANCE FOR ILLEGAL STRIKE, ASHKELON AFFAIR IS PERHAPS MOST EXTREME CASE IN RECENT YEARS OF HIGHLY PAID GROUP OF WORKERS IN KEY SECTOR OF ECONOMY IGNORING HISTADRUT, COURT INJUNCTION AND POLICE ORDER TO SAVE LUCRATIVE JOBS. (WORKERS REPORTEDLY EARN SALARIES FAR IN EXCESS OF WORKERS OF COMARABLE SKILL.)
VELIOTES

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